

Exposing traumas in Stephen King's *The Shining* and *Doctor Sleep*

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Abstract

*This article aims at casting an innovative light on Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) and its sequel, *Doctor Sleep* (2013) by showing how theories of trauma are applicable to the mainstream American writer's work. On the stage set up for his readers, King unveils a journey of traumas but he also lifts up the curtain on the ways to cope with the consequences of these traumas. Both narratives follow the flawed hero, Danny Torrance, reveal the shattering experiences lived by the latter as a five-year-old child in *The Shining* and the ensuing post traumatic disorders in *Doctor Sleep*. The texts not only offer a coalescence of traumas, representing a journey of repression and haunting but they equally open the way on the possibility of healing.*

Keywords: trauma, repression, regression, disorders, repetition compulsion, healing.

“The tears that heal are also the tears that scald and scourge”.¹ This quotation from King’s *The Shining* (1977) encompasses the themes of the monstration of physical and psychological suffering, the repression but equally the resurgence of traumatic events or the quest for redemption. On the stage set up by the mainstream American writer in *The Shining* and its sequel, *Doctor Sleep* (2013), King unveils a journey of traumas but also lifts up the veil on the consequences of these traumas and on the ways to roam the path of healing. Both narratives follow the flawed hero, Danny Torrance, who goes through shattering experiences as a five year-old child in *The Shining* and is then confronted with post traumatic disorders in *Doctor Sleep*. This article attempts at presenting the multi-shaped traumas gone through by Danny by keeping in the background of our analysis Laurie Vickroy’s explicitation of trauma as “a response to events so overwhelmingly intense that they impair normal emotional or cognitive response and bring lasting psychological disruption” (Vickroy, p. ix). In order to account for Danny’s shattering of identity and self-destructive behaviour as an adult, the stress will be laid on the supernatural aspect permeating the narratives while also keeping in mind the rational context these narratives are inserted in. The dysfunctions pregnant in the Torrance family’s history and Danny’s feeling of guilt once an adult following a consciously perpetrated immoral act will be brought to the fore. The texts offer a coalescence of traumas, a journey of repression and haunting.

1. Unveiling a kaleidoscope of traumas

Studying psychological trauma signifies “bearing witness to horrible events” (Herman, p. 7); “at the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force” (Herman, p. 33). Dramatic events are indeed at the core of King’s *The Shining* and, in the malevolent world of the Overlook hotel, physical and psychological traumas are conjoined. The light has to be cast on those horrible events which harmed the characters and triggered a sense of helplessness. In *The Shining*, King explores the traumatic past of the parents, Jack and Wendy, and unveils the shattering experiences lived by their son, Danny. *The Shining* is mainly set at the Overlook Hotel, a modernized Gothic castle isolated in the Colorado Mountains; locus of a horrible past, it is haunted by malevolent ghosts which come back to life and cause the fall into irrationality and monstrosity for the villain patriarch. Hired as the caretaker of the hotel for a winter, Jack Torrance takes Wendy and Danny in this retreat supposed to give him the opportunity to pick up on his writing career. The family quickly becomes entrapped in this Piranesian setting, not only by the snow but also by the resurgence of a traumatic past engrained in the hotel. Although the confrontation with the supernatural undoubtedly accounts for the traumatic events haunting Danny in his adult life, signs of deviance are presented well before the family’s arrival at the Overlook. Consequently, the analysis has first to put into the foreground the parents’ own repressed traumas.

1.a. Deviant parental figures

Jack Torrance is first and foremost depicted as a deviant father: the stress is laid on his alcohol addiction and violent temper. The narrative returns on the history of his uncurbed drinking problem, from the beers drunk during discussions with his fellow students to the celebration of his

¹ King S 1977, *The Shining*, New York, Doubleday, p. 496.

first story or the faculty parties “hitting the bars until they closed” (King 1977, p. 41) to dropping baby Danny on the floor to the denial of his alcoholism and his failure at teaching and at his career as a writer. His violent temper causes him to beat a student up, consequently losing his job as a teacher. Turning his violence against Danny when the latter pours beer over the manuscript of one of his plays, Jack breaks his son’s arm. His awareness of failing as a father is concomitant with feelings of shame, guilt, self hatred and suicidal thoughts: “shame ...revulsion... the sense of having no worth at all” (King 1977, p. 19). His unresolved addiction foreshadows his failure to be an efficient caretaker at the Overlook: “Dear God, he could use a drink. Or a thousand of them” (King 1977, p. 27). Jack’s thoughts revolve around failure, abandonment - “they would be better off if he left” - hurt and need: “his daddy hurt almost all the time, mostly about the Bad Thing. [...] a constant craving to go into a dark place” (King 1977, p. 30). Alcohol becomes his way out to forget his failures and feeling of hopelessness. The need for alcohol is conjoined with aggressive impulses:

The wanting, the *needing* to get drunk had never been so bad. His hands shook. He knocked things over. And he kept wanting to take it out on Wendy and Danny. His temper was like a vicious animal on a frayed leash. He had left the house in terror that he might strike them” (King 1977, p. 40).

Jack is totally aware of the danger he constitutes for his family but he is too weak to overcome his addiction and his feeling of helplessness.

Jack actually reproduces the pattern of violence and alcoholism he was raised in throughout his childhood. He witnessed his father almost beating his mother to death with a cane. His mother’s total submission to his father and the lie she chose to speak out to protect her husband left anger and incomprehension for Jack. The latter’s own relationship with his dad was an intermingling of love and violence: “until he had been seven he had loved the tall, big-bellied man uncritically and strongly in spite of the spankings, the black-and-blues, the occasional black eye” (King 1977, 244). The text highlights the cruelty and affection of the father figure as well as the spiral of love and violence repeating itself. Jack’s and Danny’s bond appears as an echo of that deviant relationship. Despite the fact that Jack breaks Danny’s arm, the latter’s love for his father is unconditional: “he buried his face in Daddy’s sheepskin-lined denim jacket and hugged him tight tight tight” (King 1977, 37). He waits unwaveringly for hours for Jack to return from his interview at the Overlook. Reciprocally, Jack’s love for his son is undeniable though his addiction is a source of destruction for his marriage.

As the story progresses and Jack becomes possessed by the evil spirit haunting the Overlook, he rejects any identification with his father whose voice he hears through a radio entices him to follow the path of violence and murder: “you’re not in me at all!” (King 1977, 250) This circle of rejection will also be visible at the end of *The Shining* when Danny rejects the monstrous creature Jack has been transformed into and it will find an echo in Danny’s willingness, as an adult, to repress his traumatic past memories. Thus, Jack’s childhood is marked by his father’s aggressive behaviour. If Jack is not physically violent to Wendy, the couple’s relationship is nonetheless ingrained with tension, domination, even haughtiness. The evil spirit haunting the Overlook feeds from Jack’s desire for recognition and offers a macabre alternative to compensate for his failure in his career and his marriage.

The mother figure also appears to be in the loop of traumatic memories that would have more to do about entrapment in her mother's claws. She lives a conflictual relationship with her mother who questions Wendy's ability to be a good maternal figure for Danny. She is judged to be "an inadequate mother" (King 1977, 51). Her mother's hate for Jack dates from the beginning of their relationship; Wendy was chased from the familial house, her mother blaming her for her divorce:

She wants to keep bearing you, Jack had said. The more times you phone her, the more times you crawl back begging forgiveness, the more she can beat you with your father [...] she can go on making believe it was your fault" (King 1977, p.49-50).

This explains her absence at her own daughter's wedding. Ironically, Wendy's mother is depicted as being as controlling as Jack. The resentment and anger Wendy feels towards her mother lead to her categorization as "such a grade A bitch" (King 1977, 42).

If Jack's mother accepted her husband's lies and violence out of religious righteousness, Wendy accepts to push backward the idea of divorce -although she accepts that her marriage is a "lopsided defeat" (54)- because of the infallible bond between Danny and his father and her own awe for her son: "she was in awe of her child -awe in the strict meaning of that word: a kind of undefined superstitious dread" (King 1977, p. 56). Her attitude towards her child is of devotion rather than protection. Wendy's feelings are of complete hopelessness, failure and guilt explaining the fact that

She had never dreamed there could be so much pain in life when there was nothing physically wrong. She hurt all the time. How much of it was her fault? The question haunted her" (King 1977, p. 54).

As a consequence, Wendy feels unhappy and unstable: "she leaned into the fragrant, curling stream of the tea and wept. In grief and loss for the past, and terror of the future" (King 1977, p. 16). She cries on her unfulfilled life and on the awareness of her lost dreams.

Both the paternal and the maternal figures seem helpless in coming to terms with their own personal tearing apart originating from their past. The repeated patterns of failure, of physical and moral abuse, account for the fact that the process of containment depicted by Rick Curnow in his lecture *Trauma: a Psychoanalytic Perspective* is doomed to fail for the mother:

Containment is fundamental in the relationship between parent and infant. It means that the mother can grasp and take into herself, as a container, something of the baby's earliest anxieties. We conceptualise these early anxieties as being a fear about such terrors as being dropped, or falling forever, of annihilation, of ceasing to exist, of death (Curnow 2007).

The pattern of abuse ingrained in her marriage and her endlessly conflictual relationship with her own mother prefigure Wendy's inability to bring any reassurance or protection for Danny as regards the violence and deviance consuming the paternal figure or later on against the evil forces of the Overlook. Rick Curnaw shows the consequences of "a traumatic dysfunctional family situation" on a child. Trauma already runs through the veins of the familial history and is enhanced

once the family is in the Overlook where it correlates with the omnipresence of supernatural phenomena.

1.b. Danny and the Overlook

Danny's different experiences at the Overlook hotel give life to Vickroy's definition of trauma and to the declared importance of exposing "events [so] overwhelmingly intense that they impair normal emotional or cognitive response". Danny's traumatic experiences appear to be in link with his gift of the shining which gives him precognitive visions of the future, helps him sense his parents' thoughts and communicate with Tony, his invisible friend, who turns out to be an older version of himself. His gift makes him sense the destructive force haunting the Overlook but also expands his visions brought about by the supernatural, vampiric force of the hotel.

The first traumatic event occurs in chapter 25 untitled "Inside 217". In this revisited Bluebeard chamber, Danny trespasses the frontier of the Symbolic²; he scorns away the paternal interdiction of entering the room. Danny sees the living corpse of a former host, Mrs Massey, who committed suicide in the bathtub. She is described in a grotesque hypermonstration of bodily putrefaction:

She was bloated and purple, her gas-filled belly rising out of the cold, ice-rimmed water like some fleshy island. Her eyes were fixed on Danny's, glassy and huge, like marbles. She was grinning, her purple lips pulled back in a grimace. Her breasts lolled. Her pubic hair floated" (King 1977, p. 239).

The traumatic experience holds to the monstrous, otherized feminine, the decayed and naked body which embody Freud's notion of the uncanny, the ultimate return of the repressed in the presence of death. Danny's ultimate confrontation with Mrs Massey is left in the blank of the text when "the years-damp, bloat, fish-smelling hands closed softly around his throat and he was turned into that dead and purple face" (King 1977, p. 240). Danny and the readers plunge their gaze into nothingness, into a coming to life of their most nightmarish fantasies. Moreover, the confrontation with Mrs Massey's living corpse confines Danny within the walls of silence. He confronts the Real which is left blank precisely because of its ungraspability by the Logos. The readers' imagination is left to run at high speed for they only see, like Wendy and Jack, the immediate effects of trauma.

The narrative unveils another traumatic experience in chapter 34 untitled "the hedges". Playing outside with his snow shoes, Danny is chased by three hedge lions, a dog and a rabbit. Trauma holds again to the confrontation with the impossible which shatters normal cognitive responses. It is also marked by the paradoxical feeling of imprisonment in an open snowy space: "the world closed down to the dazzling snow, the green hedged, and the whispery sound of his snowshoes and something else" (King 1977, p. 319). Danny is prisoner of his utter panic magnified by the angry roar he hears, a smell of blood and hedges and the claw-like hedges scratching his calf. Facing this "something" which is not depicted, this stain of the Real, Danny's legs give way.

² Lacan tried to uncover the processes of the unconscious through language and its associations. The Imaginary is related to identifications; the Symbolic is marked by language and is in link with the Law of the Father. The Real corresponds to what cannot be grasped by the Logos.

These two traumatic experiences leave first and foremost physical marks. Following the episode with Mrs Massey, Danny's neck is puffy with bruises. He is cut out from the order of language. There is an impossibility to vocalise his terror: "Danny shrieked. But the sound never escaped his lips; turning inward and inward, it fell down in his darkness like a stone in a well" (King 1977, p. 239). The repetition of "inward" and the imagery of a descent into nothingness prefigure the spiral-like and self-consuming pattern of trauma. The confrontation with Mrs Massey left as a void in the text parallels the radical sense of disconnection and isolation gone through by Danny.

Not only is Danny soundless but his eyes start from their sockets and his urine breaks. The absence of language and of control over his body reflects a process of regression. Danny's lack of action - "still and silent, his unfocused eyes directed out into indifferent space" (King 1977, p. 251)- constitutes his body's reaction to seeing the ungraspable. The process of regression affecting language and bodily reaction highlight the fact that "trauma imposes itself outside the grasp of cognition" (Baer 2002, p.10). The absence of movement -he is catatonic- goes along a bodily dissociation. Danny has the "zombielike face of a stranger, the eyes dull and opaque, the mouth pursued babyishly around his thumb" (King 1977, p. 264). The stress laid on the sucking of his thumb recalls Freud's oral stage in which the mouth is conceived as the primary erogenous zone; this confirms Danny's regression to the pre-oedipal stage. The sucking of his thumb echoes the oral gratification searched by the infant, though this gesture is for Danny not so much a gratification as a means of soothing or an attempt at oblivion. The feeling of dissociation corresponds to Baer's presentation of "the shattering force of trauma result[ing] from precisely that brutal expropriation of the victim's self" (Baer 2002, p. 20).

Danny's return to the order of language is later on characterized by sounds: "he suddenly began to shriek, mad sounds that escaped his straining throat in bolt after crazy, echoing bolt" (King 1977, p. 265). The numerous suspension points suffusing page 273 reinforce Danny's psychological disruption, his shattered sense of self. These elements are enlightened by the fact that "trauma is dispossession and radical self estrangement, it defines the traumatized individual through something that he or she does not own" (Baer 2002, p. 20). Danny loses the ability to verbalise and the blanks left in the text convey the sense that, at the image of Danny bordering on insanity, even the linguistic rendering of trauma is tottering on the brink of nothingness. The suspension points and the insertion of blanks are combined with the use of terms emphasizing the idea of a lack: "blank, paralysis, only, indifferent blankness" (King 1977, p. 255); "slack, empty expression" (King 1977, p. 265). The use of repetitions and negative forms -"the door would not open, would not, would not, would not" (King 1977, 240); "*Nothing there nothing there not there at all NOTHING THERE THERE IS NOTHING!*" (King 1977, p. 240)- reinforce Danny's confinement in the spiral of void left by the traumatic experiences. They appear to leave the body caught into a state of stasis. The term "regression" (King 1977, p. 323) is used in the text itself.

The confrontation between Danny and the monstrosized father is the final traumatic experience for Danny in *The Shining*. The outcome is however different from the previous experiences. When Jack eventually hunts Danny with a mallet, the son is ready for the confrontation, recognizes his father is possessed and is verbally able to reject, abject the father figure: "you're not my daddy" (King 1977, p. 475). King reworks Julia Kristeva's analysis in *The*

Powers of Horror of the necessary abjection of the mother by the child to establish the boundary between the self and the other, to leave the semiotic stage (union with the mother) and enter the symbolic stage. In *The Shining*, the possessed father becomes the Other whose rejection by Danny is necessary to obtain victory over the evil spirit haunting the Overlook.

The traumatic experiences endured by Danny combine the experiences which according to Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* increase the likelihood of harm: entrapment, exhaustion and being the witness of grotesque deaths. Curnow stresses the fact that trauma occurs when “there is a sense that death is imminent, or that one is threatened by total annihilation of the self”. In those moments of direct confrontation to death at the Overlook, Danny is made aware of the possible negation of both his body and the other’s body. His difficulty to find words to depict the moment of trauma conjoins Cathy Caruth’s insistence on the unspeakability of trauma. The ending of *The Shining* shows the impossibility for Danny to attain the necessary transformation of the traumatic events into memories due to the survivor guilt: “sometimes I wish it had been me. It was my fault. All my fault” (King 1977, p. 495). This guilt feeling corresponds to what Rick Curnow describes as one of post traumatic signs.

It can be said that the hotel also contains its own trauma represented by the evil force accumulated throughout the years. As the boiler eventually explodes causing the fall of the Overlook and Jack’s death, a shape emerges: “a huge dark shape ... for a moment it assumed the shape of a huge, obscene manta, and then the wind seemed to catch it, to tear it and shred it like old dark paper” (King 1977, 486). This shape -which is a manifestation of the Real and on which any macabre fantasies can be projected- echoes the various shapes taken by the traumatic memories the hotel was permeated with as well as the paradoxical destructive and hypnotising force haunting the hotel. This hypnotising force certainly accounts for the shattering impact on Danny as a kid and the persistence of the post traumatic signs in his adult life.

2. A life overwhelmed by trauma

King hints at the immediate aftermath of trauma at the end of *The Shining* before exploring it on a larger scale in *Doctor Sleep*. The ending of *The Shining* hints at Danny’s survivor guilt feeling and at his reliving of the traumatic experience in recurrent nightmares. This re-enactment of the past can be explained by the impossible categorisation of this traumatic past into consciousness, confirming Kardiner’s and Spiegel’s statement that unless the traumatic memories are integrated into consciousness, the improvement would not last. The first chapter of *Dr Sleep* presents in a more detailed manner the traumatic past as a haunting force relentlessly pursuing Danny. In a movement of repetition compulsion, the text comes back on the aftermath of the hotel explosion. If Wendy and Dick Halloran (who was a cook at the hotel and helped rescue Danny and his mother) bear the physical marks of the experience, the effect is clearly psychological on Danny: “only the child was unhurt. Physically, at least” King 2013, p. 3). The judiciary measures taken to help the mother and her son come to terms with their traumatic experiences by providing a financial help for three years hardly hide the scars of trauma. In his lecture, Curnow highlights the dual effect of trauma on personality development, engendering either a complete shattering of the personality or allowing to attain the path of resilience. A close reading of *Doctor Sleep* situates Danny on both of these axes.

The beginning of the narrative illustrates Curnow's viewpoint that

There is an initial breakdown when the protective shield is breached by trauma, and there may be a catastrophic disruption of functioning.' The victim 'may be silent or withdrawn ... Sometimes we describe people in this state as 'dissociated' (Curnow 2007).

The process of dissociation already visible when Danny was a child reappears two years following the burning of the Overlook. Danny's loss of speech and dissociation mark the "apparent collision of two temporalities, the incomplete past of the trauma and the presence of the symptom in catalepsy" (Baer 2002, 51). Aged eight, Danny is visited by Mrs Massey. The traumatic past resurges into the present and shatters any rational explanation: "the rational part of his mind told him she was just a fragment of unremembered bad dream that had followed him out of sleep and across the hall to the bathroom" (King 2013, 5). The sight of Mrs Massey and most importantly of the abject fluids left on the toilet seat once more open a fissure in the symbolic world. The fluids are a stain of the traumatic Real which pursues Danny and prevents a total resolution of trauma. Danny perfectly stresses the repetition compulsion lying at the heart of trauma: "she'll come back, don't you get it? *She'll come back and come back and come back*" (King 2013, 10). The ternary rhythm highlighted by the italics marks the inexorable return of trauma. Nevertheless, Danny does not seek to re-enact "a previous circumstance in which the infantile self was overwhelmed by a feeling that the very survival of the self was threatened" (Curnow 2007) but he appears to be pursued by a past which threatens his sense of self. The repetition compulsion at the heart of trauma "blocks routine mental processes from converting an experience into memory or forgetting it" (Baer 2002, p. 9). It explains Danny's impossibility of coming to terms with trauma, all the more so as the event is in link with the supernatural.

Mrs Massey appears as a reminder of unresolved trauma, of lost childhood innocence and of the loss of the adored paternal figure. Addressing the issue of trauma brings to the fore the question of memories deriving from the disruptive experience as well as the ways to contain these memories. In this matter, Target equals childhood with dissociation rather than with repression; repression is thought to be a more mature defensive process. Dissociation is the immediate post traumatic disorder for Danny and is included in Judith Herman's reference to constriction or numbing to designate how a person alters her/his state of consciousness in the face of trauma. Further ahead in the narrative, Dick nevertheless teaches Danny the process of repression in order to solve his trauma, contradicting in that sense Target's viewpoint. In an analeptic movement, the narrative returns on the sexual harassment Dick endured from his grandfather when he was a child. The failure of containment by Dick's parents left him in a state of omnipresent panic, hopelessness and silence. Following his grandfather's death, Dick had to confront the return of his trauma through the presence of his ghost. Dick's grandmother taught him the art of repression to prevent the return of the traumatic corpse. This process of repression implies imagining mental boxes and confining the ghosts into them although the process itself is left to the reader's imagination with the insertion of a blank in the text.

Repression in mental boxes however only silences trauma but does not provide with a definite resolution:

Whether or not they were alive (in their undead fashion) no longer mattered. What mattered was they were never getting out. He was safe. That was what he thought then. [...] Sometimes we just get it wrong” (King 2013, pp. 18-19).

Indeed, *Doctor Sleep* depicts the re-emergence of those traumatic memories when he is an adult through the form of nightmarish visions, disconnection and constriction.

Among the corrosive effects of trauma on personality development, Curnow mentions “disordered behaviours such as suicidality, drug abuse and self mutilation” (Curnow 2007); likewise, the Trauma Theory Abbreviated mentions that traumatized people

Feel more and more alienated from everything that gives our lives meaning - themselves, other people, a sense of direction and purpose ... It is not surprising, then, that slow self destruction through addictions, or fast self destruction through suicide, is often the final outcome of these syndromes” (Bloom 1999, p. 8).

Judith Herman perceives drugs or alcohol as another form of constriction because of their numbing effects. Danny’s post traumatic disorders as an adult appear to correspond to these patterns of destruction.

He is shown to be recurrently engaging into repetitive self destructive behaviours; alcohol, drugs and sex are his common routine: “the basic scenario never changed. He got drunk, someone said the wrong thing, chaos and bar-carnage followed. There was a dangerous dog inside his head. Sober, he could keep it on a leash” (King 2013, p. 33). The first epitaphs of *Doctor Sleep*, being quotes from the Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous, confirm the role played by alcohol as a way to tackle his unresolved trauma issues. His slow self destruction is confirmed by his enunciated desire to die: “*I wish I were dead*” (King 2013, p. 33). This quote confirms Bloom’s assertion of the death drive as one constituting element of post traumatic disorders. Danny’s life epitomizes emptiness and instability: he moves from city to city, lives day by day, has no stable place of living. He has no attachment, no relation to others.

In the vein of these patterns of disruption and alienation, Danny experiences a different traumatic event in his adult life. Though not related to the supernatural, this event epitomizes his absence of empathy and his feeling of distanciation. One morning, he wakes up, still drunk, next to a young woman, whose name first eludes him. His throbbing face, clogged-shut nostrils and the lurches from his belly bring back the resurfacing of the memories from the previous night filled with alcohol, drug, verbal and physical violence. The young woman named Deenie has an eighteen month-old baby, Tommie, whom she evidently abandoned during the night to go out with Danny. She left cocaine at hand’s reach of her son. Danny decides to steal the only 70\$ she has in compensation for his 500 \$ lost on drugs, justifying his act by the fact that Deenie feeds her baby with food stamps. He purposely brushes the voice of consciousness away -“*she might need that 70 bucks for groceries*” (King 2013, p. 40)- or that of his mother’s and leaves Deenie and her child in a state of wretchedness even though his shining helps him perceive that they are mistreated by Deenie’s older brother.

This memory of abandonment, his denial of and flight from his responsibilities (looking for Deenie's brother and prevent the sure death of the mother and her child) and the guilt ensuing from these facts constitute another trauma he will bear up to the end of the narrative as a burden. This echoes Dominick LaCapra's statement of "the hauntingly possessive ghosts of traumatic events" (LaCapra 2001, p. xi). This wound, always opened considering its resurgence in Danny's daily life and nightmares, has no supernatural connection but adds up to the past traumatic events of the Overlook and increases Danny's feelings of disconnection and his damaged self.

Danny's attitude of neglect as regards Deenie and her child illustrates another statement from Rick Curnow:

The child becomes an adult who may learn to 'evacuate' his painful feeling in action and one way of doing this is to re-enact on his or her own children, or towards other people, the same abuse that he or she suffered in childhood (Curnow 2007).

Danny's attitude of abandonment, self hatred and guilt mirror the feelings of remorse and emotional emptiness deriving from his childhood. His instability indicates a desire for oblivion, magnified by alcohol used as an auxiliary to erase his traumatic guilt. Danny's constant moving away reinforces his difficulty in establishing and retaining connections and his sense of disrupted attachment. The text itself is marked by this traumatic act. The chapter untitled "Mama" is replete with hyphens, suspension points, italic sentences, segments of sentences in capital letters; the word "canny" is repeated six times; sentences become shorter and shorter until only one word remains on the page as though the text itself is in the throes of the spiral of trauma.

Doctor Sleep nonetheless progressively hints at the positive side of the gift of the shining which Danny uses to help people die peacefully. Moving two years after Deenie's incident, the chapter "Welcome to Teenytown" marks the beginning of Danny's path towards redemption.

3. On the path of healing

Laurie Vickroy points out that "trauma cannot be faced alone and [...] recovery is possible only within the context of relationships" (Vickroy 2002, p. 22). In Danny's case, at his arrival in the town of Frazier, a bond is first established with Billy Freeman who works for the town maintenance crew. A relation of trust emerges right from their first encounter. Additionally, Casey Kingsley, a former alcoholic himself, offers Danny a job and helps him get over his addiction, offering a sense of safety and protection.

The reader recognizes in Danny's return of his invisible friend, Tony, the necessary confrontation with the past and the reopening of his mental closets for the healing process to be engaged. Danny hears Tony speak after many years of absence and he sees Tony waving in the window of a hospice. The return of his shine and Tony's presence reopen the doors of the past and the need for the acceptance of his gift.

The repetition compulsion appears as a key element both of trauma and of the healing process. According to Vickroy, "random exposure to anything remotely associated with a trauma

could return the victims to that experience” (Vickroy 2002, p. 31). The views of the mountains from his rented room in Frazier remind Danny of the coming of the snow at the Overlook:

His recollections of the Overlook had faded to hazy gray over the years, but as he unpacked his few things, a memory surfaced... and it *was* a kind of surfacing, like some nasty organic artefact (the decayed body of a small animal, say) floating to the surface of a deep lake (King 2013, p. 65).

The macabre repressed elements are on the verge of resurfacing. The repetition compulsion revealing the inevitability of its resurgence is lexically marked in such expressions as: “it will never stop” (King 2013, p. 75). “It will be back” (King 2013, p. 76). It is magnified in the following quote: “the world was the Overlook Hotel, where the party never ended. Where the dead were alive forever” (King 2013, p. 77). The force of trauma may be as endless as the haunting memories. The return to the past is necessary but with a distanciation from the original event. Danny and his father share for instance the same thought during their respective job interview (Jack to be a caretaker at the Overlook and Danny to be employed at the town common). Nevertheless Danny is able to suppress this thought -“*officious prick*” (King 2013, p. 62)- whereas his father had not.

The re-enactment of the past tainted with the process of distanciation is found in Danny’s nightmarish visions. In one of these visions, two temporalities converge: the traumatic occurrences in the Overlook as well as his guilt feeling concerning Deenie. First seeing Deenie’s ghost, Danny’s body is once more that of a five-year-old: “he was 5 again, Danny was 5, the Overlook was ashes and bones, but here was a dead woman, one he had stolen from” (King 2013, p. 67). Danny’s voice regresses to that of a child: “it was Danny’s voice, the high, frail, chanting voice of a child. ‘False face, not there, not real’” (King 2013, p. 67). Not only is he submitted to body regression but his mind returns to a five-year-old stage in its mode of functioning, hence the repetition of the formula he used as a child to make the ghosts of the Overlook vanish. Danny situates himself in what Judith Herman calls the process of intrusion. As a PTSD, it designates how the traumatic event recurs in the present, encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images, resembling the memories of young children. The traumatic scenes are reenacted in a disguised manner:

He turned on his side and something rolled against his back when he did. No, not something. *Someone*. Someone had gotten into bed with him. *Deenie* had gotten into bed with him. Only it felt too small to be Deenie. It felt more like a – He scrambled out of bed, landed awkwardly on the floor, and looked over his shoulder. It was Deenie’s little boy, Tommy. The right side of his skull was caved in. Bone splinters protruded through bloodstained fair hair. Gravy scaly muck -brains- was drying on one cheek” (King 2013, pp. 68-9).

The mention of the damaged skull, the bone splinters and the blood irremediably returns the reader to Danny’s possessed father smashing his own head with a mallet at the end of *The Shining*. Danny seems to relive the overwhelming feeling of horror he had had as a child but this feeling is displaced on baby Tommy. The biting imprint of the event returns when he wakes up: he vainly searches for physical remnants of his dream on his sheet just as the unresolved traumatic events leave stigmas on his psyche.

The gift of the shining contributes to bringing back to the surface his traumatic experiences, getting him close to insanity. Danny closes his eyes for his maddening visions to disappear as though the scopic denial could block the resurgence of the traumatic elements. Haunted by proleptic or nightmarish dreams, alcohol seems the only salvation: “the mind was a blackboard. Booze was the eraser” (King 2013, p. 76). Alcohol is thus at the same time a marker of his trauma but also a means of survival facing this trauma.

On his path of healing, Danny meets the young Abra Rafaela Stone (later on revealed to be his niece). Abra also possesses the gift of the shining. Her power is nevertheless much stronger than Danny’s. Contacting Danny through words written on a blackboard, a strong bond is created helping Danny rebuild a positive sense of self. In the course of the narrative, they dismantle the True Knot, a group of modern vampires who live on steam -the essence of a person- contained in canisters and which makes its members younger.

In order to dismantle the True Knot, Danny is forced to face the nightmares of his past and open the mental boxes he has kept locked in his mind for thirty-two years. On his path of healing, Danny is assisted by living friends, Abra’s doctor, Billy or Abra’s parents. He also receives help from the deceased Dick, who talks to him through a patient’s dead body.

To fight The True Knot, Abra uses astral projection, enabling Danny and her to exchange bodies temporarily. The repetition process is once more at play in the confrontation with the True Knot: its members reside where the Overlook used to stand. On his way to the final confrontation, Danny sees places of his childhood; once at Roof O’ the World, he recreates the room he had as a child: “a room now made only of memory” (King 2013, p. 444). The process of healing is entirely linked with the acceptance of the return of the repressed and a revisiting of the past.

Danny uses the pains of the past (the ghost of Horace Derwent, the owner of the Overlook in 1945) and those of the present (Abra’s grandmother’s cancer stored in a leaking mental box) to kill the remaining members of The True Knot. He is helped by his father’s ghost who intervenes to help kill the chief, Rose the Hat, and the ultimate goodbye marks the return of Danny’s unconditional love for his father and the acceptance of the latter’s past flaws.

Danny’s path of redemption eventually brings back order in his life: he has a stable job (he works as a janitor at Helen Rivington House) and a stable life (he has his driver’s license back, goes to AA meetings and is successful at resisting temptations) which contribute to establish safety and reconnect with ordinary life.

The ending of the novel is marked by two elements: after a 15 year-old sobriety, Danny eventually confesses his traumatic guilt about abandoning Deenie and her son. He situates himself in one of the key elements of healing for Herman: “the role of the community”. Danny is able to share the traumatic experience and the members of the AA club de-dramatize his act: “what he’d done didn’t revolt them. It didn’t even surprise them. They had heard worse. Some had done worse” (King 2013, p. 472). Once his guilt is publicly recognized, Danny can move forward. He is, through his confession, the author of his own recovery. This corresponds to Herman’s notion of “commonality”: Danny discovers that others have had similar experiences and can understand him.

His verbalisation echoes Abra's confession of her first drink and of her anger issue. At that moment, Danny is able to establish a passage from an overpowering narrative "where one can describe past events but continue to feel buried in that original experience" to a "witnessed narrative" "wherein an observant distance and perspective is maintained in the narrative even when describing overpowering events" (Vickroy 2002, p. 29). Danny accomplishes the "witnessed narrative" when he narrates the history of violence in their family and he is able to integrate the traumatic memory into his life story. He is able to set a distanciation between the sins of his forefathers and his resolved violence. The repetitive pattern is as necessary as the shining and the haunting past and both cannot be dissociated from Danny's identity; they are needed for him to obtain reconciliation with himself to become the person he wants to be, to be more forgiving of himself.

King's narratives are suffused with the notion of trauma affecting the different characters at various levels in *The Shining* and *Doctor Sleep*. This article primarily kept in view Danny Torrance's path of degeneration and redemption roamed throughout his adult life and deriving for the most part from his childhood. The narratives unveil the traumatic residues at the origin of an identity crisis leaving physical and psychological traces, thus highlighting Laplanche's and Pontalis's emphasis on "the subjects' incapacity to respond adequately to [trauma] and the upheaval and long lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organisation" (Laplanche 1974, p. 465). Marked by the supernatural events that took place at the Overlook, Danny has to face post traumatic disorders which intermingle with an act he commits as an adult and that he considers as immoral. His guilt superimposes on past traumas he thought he had carefully repressed in mental boxes, remaining an everlasting open wound. King exemplifies the image Cathy Caruth offers of the voice of trauma emerging from the wound itself. The path of redemption necessitates the acceptance of the resurgence of the past to recognize and complete the void left by trauma; for Danny, it equals verbalizing the absence left by trauma. The narratives are a journey for Danny's reconstruction of a coherent system of meaning to counteract the dispossession and loss marked in the body of the texts themselves. The narratives are about surviving trauma and undoubtedly about surviving the father's absence through a repossession of the past and its memories, a restoration of important relationships and self-esteem. The gift of the shining captures the essence of trauma: it is a source of deconstruction and reconstruction, blinding with its love and destabilising force; it is a clairvoyance which conveys the necessity of opening up to one's memories but also conveying a sense of the individual always under the process of construction.

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